

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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National Election Watch (NEW) Network plans to setup the pressure for transparency and accountability from politicians at the 5th National Conference on Electoral and Political Reforms on Jan 31st, Feb 1st, 2009 at Nehru center, Mumbai.

Mumbai – Jan 28, 2009 - National Election Watch (NEW), a nationwide campaign comprising of more than 1200 NGO and other citizen led organizations working on electoral reforms, improving democracy and governance in India has stepped up the pressure on political parties to demand accountability from them. It is planning several initiatives with the purpose of bring transparency and accountability in the political system at the 5th National Conference on Electoral and Political Reforms to be held at Nehru Center, Mumbai on Jan 31st and Feb 1st, 2009.

Details about the 5th National Conference on Electoral and Political Reforms:

The delegates to the conference will include civil society organizations, eminent citizens, media, senior bureaucrats and Police officials, leaders from the corporate sector and the political parties. The three Election Commissioners including Mr Gopalaswami, Mr Quraishi, and Mr Navin Chawla, are also planning to attend.

Talking about the conference, Mr Ajit Ranade, a founder member of ADR said, “The election watch teams from all the 28 states are participating in the conference. This will be the first time that we will use existing details on candidates that we have collected from affidavits filed by them over last several years. We will do a systematic analysis of their asset, criminal cases declarations and other information and disseminate the information to voters.”

Delegates include Mr Nikhil Dey and Ms Aruna Roy from Rajasthan, Arvind Kejriwal from Delhi, Ramchandra Guha from Karnataka, LC Jain, Ex-member Planning commission, Mr Yugandhar, ex-member, Planning commission, and several others. Also coming are Mr Manohar Parrikar, former CM Goa, Mr Suresh Prabhu, MP, Dr Jairaj Phatak, Municipal Commissioner Mumbai, Chief Electoral Officers(CEOs) of various states.

Resolutions to be passed at the conference:

National Election Watch (NEW) and its affiliated state election watch groups have been discussing various strategies to implement the following specific changes in our political system.

Talking about the resolutions, Mr Gerson Dacunha, the trustee of AGNI said, “The groups will finalize the specific details on these points and make resolutions which have emerged from consultations around the country. Most of these have been endorsed by the Election Commission. The political parties should listen to the peoples demand and make appropriate changes for their implementation”.

The specific demands of NEW partners are:

1. Barring candidates against whom criminal charges have been framed in a court. Also disqualifying of candidates who indulge in electoral malpractices, and striking off names of people with non bailable warrants from voter rolls.

2. Implementation of “None of the Above” – which would include providing a real option for people to vote “None of the Above” if people do not like any of the contesting candidates. If the “None of the Above” option gets maximum votes, it would mean that all the contesting candidates have been rejected by the voters. This would result in a re-election but the contesting candidates from the previous elections would not be allowed to contest.
3. Comprehensive bill to regulate political parties to make them more transparent and accountable - All leading democracies have such a Bill, we have none. In particular, the Income statements and sources of income should be mandatorily disclosed for all parties. The issues of inner party democracy in political parties, and greater transparency and regulation of political party funding is required.

Candidates with criminal background from recent elections:

Since 2002, the major impacts of these campaigns have been on criminalization of politics, and transparency in candidate and political party assets.

Speaking about the criminalization of politics, Mr Anil Bairwal, National Coordinator of ADR and National Election watch said, “As a result of the election watch campaigns across the country, the percentage of contesting candidates with criminal records has come down from over 20% to about 12% based on the data from recent elections. Leaders of both the BJP and the Indian National Congress have made public statements that they would not field candidates with criminal records even if they were likely to win in the coming Lok Sabha elections. This however has not been the case. Although the percentage of contesting candidates has come down, the % of elected representative has marginally gone up. A lot more needs to be done. People want able and honest people to lead them and not those against whom criminal charges have been framed in a court.”

Here are consolidated results on the number of MLAs from the recent elections.

2008										
<i>state</i>	<i>No of contesting candidates</i>	<i>affidavits looked into by NEW</i>	<i>candidates with criminal records</i>	<i>% of candidates with criminal records</i>	<i>No of seats contested</i>	<i>BJP MLAs with criminal records</i>	<i>INC MLAs with criminal records</i>	<i>Other MLAs with criminal records</i>	<i>No of candidates who won with criminal records</i>	<i>% of MLAs with criminal records</i>
CG	1066	902	76	8%	90	6	5	0	11	12%
MP	3179	1084	190	18%	230	27	23	4	54	23%
DEL	863	645	91	14%	69	9	16	2	27	39%
RJ	2194	1770	189	11%	200	7	13	10	30	15%
MZ	206	206	3	1%	40	-	2	1	3	8%
Total	7508	4607	549	12%	629	49	59	17	125	20%

The consolidated data for all previous elections is also attached at the back.

Launch of National Election Watch website:

ADR and the National Election Watch(NEW) will be launching a new interactive website accessible as www.nationalelectionwatch.com. ADR and the National Election Watch has got data of over 25000 candidates who have contested over last 7 years, based on the information filed by them in their affidavits.

All this data will henceforth be available on this website in an easy searchable form. To begin with, there will data on all the current Lok Sabha MPs and from two states that went to polls recently, Delhi and Mizoram. The information on all states on this website will be available in a phase manner within next few months.

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About NEW

The *National Election Watch (NEW)* is a nationwide campaign comprising of more than 1200 NGO and other citizen led organizations working on electoral reforms, improving democracy and governance in India. The National Election Watch is active in almost all states of India and has done election watch for all states and Lok Sabha elections since ADR, along with couple other organizations, won the PIL in Supreme Court in 2002 to making disclosure of educational, financial and criminal background of electoral candidates mandatory.

About ADR

Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) is a Non-Political, Non-Partisan and a Non-Governmental Organization whose PIL filed in Dec 1999 culminated in a Supreme Court order on Mar 13, 2003 requiring disclosure of criminal, financial and educational background of all contesting candidates. Since then ADR has done Election Watches in almost all State Assembly and Lok Sabha elections. It continues to works towards strengthening democracy and governance in India by focusing on fair and transparent electoral and political processes. It is currently conducting election watch in all states going for assembly polls.

You can learn more about ADR at: <http://www.adrindia.org>

STATE WISE INFORMATION

CRIMINAL RECORDS OF CANDIDATES AND WINNERS SINCE 2002

COMPILED BY ADR FROM ELECTION WATCH REPORTS OF VARIOUS STATES

FIFTH NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ELECTORAL AND POLITICAL PARTY REFORMS

Jan 31st & Feb 1st, 2009:

Mumbai

Details of Candidates with Pending Criminal Cases in each state- starting 2003								
S.N O	Election Watch	Total Candi- dates Contested	Total Candi- dates Considered by ADR/NEW	No. of Candidates with pending Criminal Cases	%age of Candidates with pending cases w.r.t. candidates considered	Total Winners (# of Assembly seats)	Total Winners with pending cases	%age of winners with pending cases w.r.t. total winners
1	Madhaya Pradesh Nov, 2003, Assembly	2171	753	Not Available	Not Available	230	36	15.65
2	Maharastra Oct 2004, Assembly	2678	1625	366	22.5	288	86	29.86
3	Karnataka Dec, 2004, Assembly	1715	1715	211	12.3	224	56	25.00
4	Orissa May, 2004, Assembly	802	802	135	16.83	147	41	27.89
5	Bihar Feb, 2005, Assembly	1279	1199	418	34.86	243	102	41.97
6	Harayana Feb, 2005, Assembly	983	529	60	11.34	90	23	25.56
7	Jharkhand Feb, 2005, Assembly	1390	518	151	29.15	81	25	30.86
8	Bihar Nov, 2005, Assembly	2135	1613	451	28	243	119	49
9	West Bengal May, 2006, Assemby	1654	1129	217	19.22	294	45	15.31
10	Assam May, 2006, Assembly	997	698	35	5.041	126	7	5.56
11	Tamil Nadu May, 2006, Assembly	2586	1366	201	14.71	234	77	32.91
12	Pondicherry May, 2006, Assembly	218	145	12	8.28	30	4	13.33
13	Manipur Assembly 2007	308	308	4	1.3	60	1	1.66
14	Punjab Assembly 2007	1043	612	74	12.09	117	20	17.09
15	Uttrakhand Assembly 2007	806	806	59	7.32	70	13	18.57
16	Uttar Pradesh Assembly 2007	6086	5940	881	14.83	403	160	38.3
17	Himachal Pradesh Assembly 2007	336	336	50	14.88	68	21	30.88
18	Meghalaya Assembly 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None of the candidates contesting the assembly elections had any criminal cases pending against them. The state can have the honour of a Clean Assembly. 						
19	Nagaland Assembly 2008	218	218	2	0.92	60	0	0.00
20	Tripura Assembly 2008	313	313	6	1.92	60	1	1.67
21	Gujarat Assembly 2008	1268	1268	233	18.38	182	45	24.73
22	Karnataka Assembly 2008	2242	2242	142	6.33	234	42	17.95
23	Madhaya Pradesh Assemby 2008	3179	1168	208	17.81	230	54	0.00
24	Chhattisgarh Assemby 2008	1066	904	76	8.41	90	11	12.22
25	Rajasthan Assemby 2008	2194	2194	225	10.26	200	30	15.00
26	Delhi Assembly 2008	875	645	92	14.26	70	27	38.57
27	Mizorum Assembly 2008	206	206	3	1.46	40	2	5.00
28	Lok Sabh May, 2004	5435	3182	478	15.02	539	120	22.26